

continued gratitude to our veterans by improving a wide range of veterans' benefits and programs. I am particularly pleased that H.R. 4110 includes so many Administration proposals.

Most important, the bill provides a 1.3 percent increase in compensation payments to veterans with service-connected disabilities and in dependency and indemnity compensation to the survivors of those whose deaths were service-related. This increase, effective December 1, 1998, reflects the same percentage increase in benefits that Social Security beneficiaries and veterans' pension recipients will receive. Approximately 2.3 million veterans and over 300,000 surviving spouses and children will benefit from this increase, which will ensure that the value of their well-deserved benefits is maintained.

The bill also furthers the Nation's commitment to veterans who served in the Persian Gulf War. In particular, it extends existing authority for providing priority health care to Gulf War veterans through December 31, 2001. In addition, the bill bolsters efforts by the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA), Defense, and Health and Human Services, with the help of independent scientific organizations, to study and treat these veterans' illnesses in a scientifically sound and effective manner. Furthermore, this legislation enhances outreach efforts to Gulf War veterans and broadens the public's access to the findings of federally sponsored research on the health consequences of service in the Persian Gulf.

The bill contains a number of provisions to help veterans reach their educational and employment goals. For instance, the legislation expands veterans' options for entering on-the-job training programs and meeting requirements for Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits. In addition, the bill reinforces and expands an individual's right to return to a job after military service, as provided by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

Other provisions revise veterans' pension and insurance programs. For example, the legislation increases the special pension paid to recipients of the Medal of Honor, the Nation's highest military award. Additionally, the bill provides increased assistance to cer-

tain veterans with terminal illnesses by allowing them to receive a portion of their life insurance benefits as "living benefits," helping them to meet medical and living expenses during their time of special need.

The bill includes many other provisions to improve the quality and effectiveness of VA services to veterans. One provision permanently restructures and streamlines VA housing loan operations. Another provision contributes to high-quality VA health care by authorizing the Department to establish new educational benefits for certain categories of health care professionals to help attract and retain the best qualified employees.

This Nation owes no greater debt of gratitude than to our veterans, particularly those who have suffered disability or who made the supreme sacrifice while defending our freedoms. Each Veterans Day, the Nation makes a special effort to give thanks for and to honor the sacrifices of veterans and their families. This comprehensive legislation further expresses our gratitude to these brave men and women, not just on Veterans Day, but every day. For that reason, I am privileged to sign H.R. 4110 into law.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 11, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 4110, approved November 11, was assigned Public Law No. 105-368.

Memorandum on Creation of the Military and Veterans Health Coordinating Board

November 11, 1998

*Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense,
the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the
Secretary of Health and Human Services*

*Subject: Creation of Military and Veterans
Health Coordinating Board*

Our Nation is truly indebted to our active duty military, reservist, National Guard, and veterans for protecting America's interests around the globe. From small peacekeeping missions to large combat operations, these men and women put their lives on the line to ensure our peace and prosperity at home

and abroad. We owe them and their families a great debt. We have an obligation to protect their health while they serve and to care for their service-connected injuries or illnesses for as long as they live.

Our experience with the Gulf War demonstrated that we were not adequately prepared to deal with the health consequences resulting from a large-scale combat deployment in the unique environment our soldiers faced. The aftermath of this conflict underscored the need to improve significantly our ability to address post-deployment health problems. Your extensive efforts to understand the causes and treat the illnesses experienced by Gulf War veterans have identified numerous deficiencies in the way we prepare for and deal with the health of our military, veterans, and their families. I am pleased that we are applying these lessons learned from the Gulf War and other recent military missions to current and future military deployments.

In its December 31, 1996, report, my Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses recommended that the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) review existing Federal policies and programs and develop an interagency plan "to address health preparedness for and readjustment of veterans and families after future conflicts and peacekeeping missions." The NSTC's plan, developed by your departments, identifies numerous actions, including improved health protection for military forces, which must be taken to avoid the mistakes of the past. One of the key recommendations contained in the plan is to establish a Military and Veterans Health Coordinating Board to continue improving the coordination among your departments and to oversee the implementation of the NSTC's plan.

Therefore, I direct you to establish the Military and Veterans Health Coordinating Board and report annually to the Assistants to the President for National Security Affairs and for Science and Technology on its progress. Specifically, the Board should focus on issues associated with deployment health, research, and communications regarding health risks. In addition, the Board must ensure that record-keeping requirements

linked to military and veterans health preparedness, health protection for military forces, disease prevention, and medical care are incorporated into your departments' relevant information technology and information management systems.

William J. Clinton

Remarks Announcing Grants for After-School Programs

November 12, 1998

The President. Thank you very much, Rose, for giving us a wonderful example of what these endeavors are all about. Hillary and I are delighted to have all of you—parents, administrators and teachers, child care advocates, grant recipients—here in the White House today. We especially thank Congressman Castle, Congresswoman Lowey, Senator Robb, Senator Specter, Congressmen Hoyer and Cardin and King and Levin and Quinn.

I thank Olivia Golden, our HHS Administrator for Children and Families, for being here, along with Mike Smith and Kent McGuire from the Education Department. We welcome Mayor Davis, Mayor Ganim, Mayor Schundler, and all of you.

I have enjoyed this day very much already because Hillary and I are, I think it's fair to say, virtually obsessed with the idea of expanding after-school programs and affordable child care. And to see this reaching across party lines to support our children, our families, and our communities is a deeply moving thing to me. But I'd like to begin my remarks, since I essentially can't add much to what has already been said—I want to ask you to think about a question that we have—all of us who are parents, at least, who have ever taken our children on trips when they were young—have heard them say, "Are we there, yet? Are we there yet?" [Laughter]

So in spite of what we come to celebrate today, the truth is that when it comes to raising our children in this new era, we are not there yet. But when I look at the people on this podium and the faces out in this crowd, I realize that this is clearly an area where we can put the progress of our people ahead of our partisan differences and that, if we